

LCQ16: Provision of physical activities for primary and secondary students

Following is a question by the Hon Vincent Cheng and a written reply by the Secretary for Education, Dr Choi Yuk-lin, in the Legislative Council today (March 20):

Question:

The findings of the Territory-wide Physical Fitness Survey for the Community announced by the Community Sports Committee last year have pointed out that the physical activity level of children and adolescents failed to attain the level recommended by the World Health Organisation (i.e. an average of 60 minutes or more of moderate-to-vigorous physical activities per day per week). There are views that increasing the physical education (PE) lesson time for primary and secondary students can promote their physical and mental health. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) as the discussion paper on "Physical Education and Arts Education in Primary and Secondary Schools" submitted by the authorities to the Panel on Education of this Council on the second of last month has pointed out that in general, schools strengthen students' physical development through a life-wide learning approach, which includes introducing physical activity sessions such as morning exercise, increasing the proportion of physical activities in multiple intelligences lessons, arranging students to take part in physical activities during recess, lunch break or after school, and organising school team training, inter-house/class sports competitions, etc., whether the authorities have compiled statistics on the proportion of schools adopting the aforesaid learning approach, with a tabulated breakdown by geographical constituency for the 2021 Legislative Council General Election; whether the authorities have assessed the effectiveness of adopting the aforesaid learning approach by such schools;

(2) whether it has compiled statistics on the number and types of new sports introduced by all schools in Hong Kong, as well as the proportion of schools which have introduced new sports; if so, of the details (including whether students take part in new sports in PE lessons or in the form of extra-curricular activities);

(3) given that the Government has been supporting schools in employing retired athletes as School Sports Promotion Coordinators through the Retired Athletes Transformation Programme since 2018, of the number of retired athletes employed through the Programme in the past five years, as well as the sports to which such athletes belonged and their average salaries;

(4) as the Physical Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary One

to Secondary Six) currently stipulates that schools should allocate five per cent to eight per cent of the total lesson time to PE lessons at the primary level, but the Primary Education Curriculum Guide (Pilot Version) introduced in 2022 recommends that the PE lesson time should account for no less than five per cent of the total lesson time, of the authorities' current requirement for the PE lesson time in primary schools;

(5) whether the authorities have reviewed and compiled statistics to see if the percentage of the PE lesson time in primary and secondary schools has reached five per cent to eight per cent of the total lesson time, and have compiled detailed statistics on the average weekly PE lesson time in primary and secondary schools; if the authorities have, of the details; if not, the reasons for that; and

(6) as it is learnt that the PE lesson time for students in Hong Kong is significantly less than that for students on the Mainland and in Singapore and Finland, and a public opinion survey has pointed out that over 75per cent of the parents of students are in favour of increasing the PE lesson time, whether the authorities will consider conducting a study on increasing the PE lesson time and forging a consensus with the education sector and others; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

Physical Education (PE) is one of the five domains of ethics, intellect, physique, social skills and aesthetics, thus has always been an essential component of school education to foster students' balanced, whole-person development throughout their journey in primary and secondary schools. The Education Bureau (EDB) has explained in detail the direction and strategies for promoting PE in primary and secondary schools to the Legislative Council Panel on Education (Note 1) in February 2024. Helping students lead a healthy lifestyle is one of the seven learning goals of primary and secondary education. Apart from providing at least two PE lessons per week for students in accordance with the PE curriculum guide as required by the EDB, schools generally adopt a life-wide learning approach with diversified physical activities within and beyond the classroom to develop students' motor skills, enhance their physical fitness, form a habit of regular participation in physical activities and promote a healthy lifestyle, thereby instilling in them positive values and attitudes.

Our reply to the Hon Vincent Cheng's question is as follows:

(1) and (2) The EDB has all along been supporting schools to promote school PE development through a life-wide learning approach, including conducting ongoing renewal of curriculum guides, developing learning and teaching resources, providing training for PE teachers, organising teacher professional networks, and launching the "Active Students, Active People" Campaign, with a view to assisting schools in flexibly arranging different sports-related activities for students. As revealed from our communication

with schools and relevant information collected, schools generally adopt a life-wide learning approach to promote the development of PE. For example, having regard to school contexts, a variety of appropriate physical activities may be arranged for students before morning assemblies, during recess or lunch break, and after school hours; sports-related extra-curricular activities and activities such as sports days, swimming galas and school team trainings are organised; opportunities to participate in inter-school sports competitions are offered for students to engage in different sports activities.

To promote newly emerging sports, the EDB encourages schools to flexibly introduce different kinds of sports in alignment with the PE curriculum. The EDB has also developed a variety of learning and teaching resources on newly emerging sports such as rope skipping and 3-on-3 basketball, and conducted professional development programmes for teachers to introduce various newly emerging sports such as pickleball, tchoukball and floorball so as to enhance teachers' knowledge. As the introduction of different sports in a school depends on a number of factors such as the physical environment and facilities available, student interests, teachers' expertise and experiences, the EDB does not have the statistics of related information.

In addition, schools also actively participate in sports activities organised by different government departments. For example, the School Sports Programme (SSP) organised by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) has been well-received by schools since its launch. A total of over 345 000 students from 608 schools participated in the SSP in 2022-23. In 2023-24, the SSP will also promote newly emerging sport events such as 3-on-3 basketball. To encourage students to engage in physical activities, improve their cardiovascular and musculoskeletal health with the aim to reduce the risk of chronic non-communicable diseases, starting from the 2019/20 school year, the criteria of physical activities in the "sportACT Award Scheme" has included daily routine physical activities such as housework, stair climbing, brisk walking during commuting, and hiking, so as to integrate physical activity into their daily lives.

(3) Organised by the Culture, Sports and Tourism Bureau, the Retired Athletes Transformation Programme aims to provide additional opportunities for athletes to realise their potential for post-retirement career development in the longer-term, allowing them to assist schools and sports organisations in promoting sports, and identifying and nurturing potential sports talents. In the past five years, a total of 249 retired athletes have been employed as School Sports Promotion Coordinators under the programme. The number of retired athletes employed and their relevant expertise are as follows:

Sports	School Year				
	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
Triathlon	4	4	1	1	1
Handball	6	6	4	6	6

Water Polo	0	0	1	0	0
Athletics	4	4	5	4	3
Table-tennis	1	1	1	1	1
Badminton	0	1	0	0	0
Football	3	3	7	8	6
Cricket	1	1	0	0	0
Karatedo	5	5	5	3	3
Tenpin Bowling	7	7	6	6	6
Judo	2	2	2	2	2
Boxing	0	0	0	2	2
Cycling	9	8	3	5	6
Baseball	1	1	1	1	1
Taekwondo	1	2	3	3	4
Windsurfing	1	0	0	0	0
Sports Climbing	1	1	1	1	1
Squash	1	2	1	1	1
Canoe	0	0	0	1	1
Dragonboat	0	0	1	1	1
Rowing	4	4	3	2	2
Fin Swimming	1	1	1	1	1
Basketball	0	0	1	0	0
Total	52	53	47	49	48

The salary of the retired athletes employed is determined by their years of training as senior or professional athletes, as well as their relevant working experiences. The starting salary is between \$17,980 and \$25,590 per month.

(4), (5) and (6) The education systems, curriculum frameworks, teaching and assessment policies in different regions are developed based on factors such as their unique social culture, background, spatial environment, history and economy. In formulating the PE curriculum in Hong Kong, the EDB and the Curriculum Development Council have taken into account students' development needs as a whole and have sought to balance the diverse expectations of Hong Kong society regarding student learning. Currently, primary and secondary schools are providing at least two PE lessons per week for students in accordance with the curriculum guide and, through a wide range of physical activities, foster students' interest in sports, develop their motor skills and improve their physical fitness. These initiatives aim to develop students' habit of doing regular exercise and cultivate their positive values and attitudes.

According to the Primary Education Curriculum Guide (Pilot Version) (2022), primary schools are required to allocate at least five per cent of the total lesson time to PE lessons, without an upper limit. Schools can fully utilise the flexible lesson time to promote a balanced physical and mental health development among students. The recommended lesson time is a result of extensive consultation with and support obtained from the school sector. According to observations during curriculum visits, some primary schools have flexibly arranged three or more PE lessons per week, demonstrating that this recommendation has provided schools with greater flexibility in timetabling.

The promotion of students' physical development in schools is not confined to PE lessons. Schools should make good use of flexible lesson / learning time through a life-wide learning approach, and encourage students to participate in physical activities in their spare time. The EDB has issued the EDB Circular No. 5/2024 titled "Developing an Active and Healthy Lifestyle Through Promoting Physical Activities"(Note 2) in February 2024 to provide strategies, specific recommendations as well as information on relevant curriculum resources and support measures to schools. The circular contains examples of physical activities and a logbook to guide students in participating in physical activities beyond PE lessons. Students may take part in school team training and engage in routine physical activities such as brisk walking, stair climbing, household chores, stretching exercises to integrate the habit of exercise into their daily lives.

The EDB has been using various means such as inspections, school visits and regular contacts with schools to understand and review the implementation of work in schools (including PE lesson time). Professional advice and support will be provided to schools to facilitate schools' self-improvement and sustainable development. If any non-compliance is found, immediate follow-up actions will be taken. The EDB will continue to provide support and collaborate with the LCSD and other departments to assist schools in promoting students' physical fitness and health.

Note 1:

www.legco.gov.hk/yr2024/english/panels/ed/papers/ed20240202cb4-123-3-e.pdf

Note 2: applications.edb.gov.hk/circular/upload/EDBC/EDBC24005E.pdf